"F" Street Bridge (Palouse Flour Mill Bridge)
Spanning the Palouse River on Main Street
Palouse
Whitman County
Washington

HAER No. WA-31

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Western Regional Office
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

"F" Street Bridge
(Palouse Flour Mill Bridge)

HAER No. WA-31

Location: Spanning the Palouse River on Main Street, intersecting with north approach to "F" Street Bridge, connecting with Fourth Street
City of Palouse, Whitman vicinity, Washington

UTM: 11:494780.5194950
Quad: Palouse

Date of Construction: 1901

Builder/Contractor: Gillette-Herzog Manufacturing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Present Owner: City of Palouse
P.O. Box 248
Palouse, Washington 99161

Present Use: Vehicular bridge; to be moved in 1991

Significance: The steel "F" Street Bridge is the last through Pratt truss bridge in the State of Washington. Favored for its simplicity of materials and ease of assembly, the Pratt truss design is representative of a type claimed to have been most commonly used in bridge construction in the early twentieth century for spans under 250 feet in length. The bridge is important locally for the role it played in the agricultural development of the upper Palouse River region, an area encompassing the Washington and Idaho state lines. The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Report prepared by: Robin Bruce
Historian
Archaeological and Historical Services
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington 99004

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INTRODUCTION

The "F" Street bridge crosses the Palouse River on the east city limits of Palouse, Washington, an incorporated city located in eastern Whitman County, Washington. The city of 930 residents (population as of 1988) is a small service-oriented community serving local farmers in the vicinity (*U.S. Government Documents, County and Community Profiles* 1988:Whitman-2).

The city of Palouse parallels the Palouse River Valley floor, east to west, and extends up several steep terraces north and south of the river. Constructed in 1901, the "F" Street Bridge is the easternmost bridge over the Palouse River at Palouse, and connects Main Street (Palouse's business district) with Fourth Street. Fourth Street serves the southeastern residential area of Palouse and the rich farming district beyond (south and east of) the community. "F" Street is the nearest north/south street to the "F" Street Bridge crossing. Although "F" Street does not intersect with Main Street where the bridge is located, the structure appears to have been named for the nearest north/south street following the bridge's loss of association with the flour mill for which it was first named (Palouse Flour Mill Bridge). The flour mill burned to the ground in 1923 and was never rebuilt (see p. 11, paragraph 2). A short, steep vertical approach connects the "F" Street Bridge to Main Street--Main Street becomes State Highway Route 272 after passing beyond Palouse's eastern city limits. A very sharp (nearly 90° turn) precedes the western approach to the bridge from Fourth Street. As this report later reveals, the steep approach from Main Street and, in particular, the abrupt corner which marks the Fourth Street approach presented a traffic hazard at the time the bridge was constructed and has continued to cause problems throughout the long life of the "F" Street Bridge (see photographs WA-31-4 and WA-31-5).

SITE DESCRIPTION AND LAYOUT

Although the "F" Street Bridge is located within the Palouse city limits, its setting is decidedly rural. The bridge crossing is characterized by a rather narrow riverine channel which is flanked by rugged basalt bluffs above both the north and south banks of the river. Scattered fir and ponderosa pine cluster along the base of the bluffs. On the river's south bank, ca. 100 feet upstream (east) of the bridge, lies a concrete pad, reportedly remains of a mill pond dam. The dam once impounded water to power milling equipment for the flour mill which formerly sat adjacent (east) of the bridge's Fourth Street approach (Robert West interview of 10 September 1990). Upstream from the bridge, a grassy flat widens into an open level terrace. The terrace parallels the river ca. 0.33 miles east before being pinched off by steep bluffs. Following the north bank of the river, west ca. 0.25 miles downstream from the bridge,is the commercial center of Palouse, an area encompassing mostly tum of the century brick and frame buildings,

a number of which presently lie vacant. The area north of the bridge is residential, as is the land immediately to the south, though dwellings are more scattered to the south. Native shrubbery, deciduous trees, and low-lying grasses indigenous to a stream side environment thrive in the vicinity of the bridge, as illustrated in Photograph WA-31-1. This lush environment provides habitat for hawks, herons, and various smaller birds, as well as affords cover for raccoons, badgers, skunks, and other small mammals and rodents, further enhancing the pastoral character of the site.

DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURE

The "F" Street Bridge is a seven panel, 140 foot, steel pin-connected through Pratt truss bridge. The bridge is designed for vehicle traffic only, and contains no pedestrian sidewalks or safety curbs. The width of the bridge's rough cut, wood plank deck (curb to curb) is 15.9 feet (Anderson-Perry & Associates, "Environmental Assessment and Programmatic 4(f) Evaluation, City of Palouse, Washington, 'F' Street Bridge Replacement," 1989:3,49). The vehicular guard rails consist of two, 2 x 8 inch railings, connected to a series of wooden posts (see Photograph WA-31-2). The height of the truss is twenty-three feet, and the length of each panel is 20 feet. The bridge's upper chords each consist of 7 1/4 x 2 inch channels with cover plates. The diagonal members are composed of 2 x 3/4 inch steel rods, and the steel suspension rods are 1 inch thick. End posts are constructed of 7 1/4 inch steel channels, finished with 12 inch cover plates. The posts are constructed of 2 x 5 inch steel channels. The floor beams consist of 16 inch steel "I" beams, with 3 x 16 inch stringers (see photograph WA-31-6). The bridge rests on a foundation of concrete tubular steel (four steel casings filled with concrete). The bridge's right hand approach measures ca. 40 feet and its left hand approach measures ca. 26 feet (Whitman County "Bridge Report" 1909).

Recent inspections of the "F" Street Bridge have revealed deficiencies indicative of age, metal fatigue, and obsolescence: the bridge's trusses are in fair to poor condition, the top chord on the center panel of the west truss is out of alignment and slightly twisted, and one of the main stringers has a split ("Environmental Assessment" 1989:8). However, the floor beams are in fair condition, indicating that they have been replaced one or more times (ibid.). Because of deficiencies such as these, coupled with present load and weight restrictions, grain trucks and farm equipment cannot cross the "F" Street bridge, which has a posted weight limit of 10,000 pounds and has recently been closed to all traffic (see photograph WA-31-5).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The "F" Street Bridge is an example of steel Pratt truss style of bridge architecture commonly used in bridge construction in the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The truss configuration in bridge building was first introduced in America in Colonial times. Of simple design, the truss is formed by adding diagonal members to ladder-like framed structures. The truss can run from abutment to abutment (the solid supports at the ends of the bridge (or, if there are wider distances to span, from pier to pier (the supports between the abutments). When bisected by a diagonal, the rectangular truss forms two triangles which are rigid. In theory, a triangle formed of rigid materials is indestructible; however, the strength of the form depends largely on the strength of the connecting materials. In brief, pressure applied to various points of the triangle cause compression in some members and tension in others. The dynamics of pressure and compression was the principal concern of bridge designers who were experimenting with the truss configuration.

The patenting of the Howe Truss Bridge in 1840 represented an important advance in bridge engineering. At that time Elias Howe introduced the use of wrought iron in bridge design, where formerly timber was used. The use of iron simplified the appearance--therefore the quantity of members--of the bridge by reducing the number of diagonals in the truss. Because wood was an inferior material for members under tension, Howe used wrought iron rods for vertical tension members. The rods extended through both the top and bottom chords (horizontal members of the structure). Nuts were then attached to the threaded end of the rods so that the bridge could be periodically tightened.

The Pratt Truss Bridge, designed in 1844 by an American father and son engineering team, Caleb and Thomas Pratt, modified the Howe Truss. The Pratt Truss featured the diagonals sloping up and away from either side of the bridge center, with the diagonal iron rods in tension and the vertical members in compression, a reversal of the Howe design (see photograph WA-31-2). Although originally framed in timber, with the availability of iron, and later with the introduction of steel, by 1900 iron and steel prevailed in the construction of Pratt Truss bridges (Joseph Gies *Bridges and Men* 1963:99-105, 219-220).

The introduction of pin-connected trusses by J. W. Murphy in 1863 eliminated the need for more labor-intensive riveted trusses, use of the latter which involved skilled craftsman heating the rivets as they were placed (Henry Tyrrell *History of Bridge Engineering* 1911:173). Utilization of pin connections when combined with the simplicity of the Pratt truss design proved particularly beneficial for bridge building in the West. With its uncomplicated pin connections, fabrication occurred mainly in the factory. Parts such as channel sections, lacing bars, and eyebars, could then easily be assembled in the field by unskilled laborers--work which required

little or no technical supervision--a distinct advantage in the West where distances were wide and skilled craftsman often at a premium (Gies 1963:219-220; U.S. Department of the Interior *Historic Bridges in Montana* 1982:38). Following completion of the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads in the 1880s, capitalists in midwestern manufacturing and railroad centers were quick to appreciate the utility of the pin-connected Pratt truss design, a design which, in essence, allowed for rapid factory assembly of Pratt truss bridges. With the availability of dependable rail transportation, midwestern bridge contractors (particularly from Minneapolis) enjoyed direct links from Midwest factories and foundries to western bridge building sites. These distant competitors proved stiff rivals for local bridge contractors (*Historic Bridges in Montana* 1982:33).

Construction of the "F" Street bridge typified this trend in custom Pratt truss bridge building. Early in 1901, the Whitman County Commissioners directed the county auditor to "advertise for a county bridge across the Palouse River at Palouse City, said bridge to be a combination 140 foot span" (*Commissioner's Journal K*, Whitman County, Washington August 6,1900 through January 9, 1902:194). Five bridge builders subsequently competed for the contract, three of who were local, and two who hailed from outside the area. Bids were opened on 11 February 1901. While the local contractors submitted bids for one bridge plan each, both the Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging Company and the Gillette-Herzog Manufacturing Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, submitted bids for three separate plans. The commissioners opted for plan "No. 3 steel comb. tubular piers" submitted by Gillette-Herzog Manufacturing Company. The award was in the amount of $2,753.00, which, incidentally, was not the lowest bid presented. The low bid of $1,973.00 was, however, also submitted by Gillette-Herzog for plan "No. 1" (Commissioner's Journal 1902:269). The ability of large corporate bridge contractors to submit multiple bids reflecting a wide range of plans, options, and costs is both indicative of the boon enjoyed by manufacturers with direct access to Midwestern transportation, manufacturing, and labor centers, as well as the difficulties those same advantages posed for local contractors who did not enjoy such versatility.

The "Gillette-Herzog Mfg. Co., Skeleton Steel Construction" formally organized in 1884 when Michigan-born capitalist Lewis Singer Gillette purchased half interest in the Herzog Manufacturing Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Gillette had earlier served as right-of-way agent for the Great Northern Railroad, a position which no doubt acquainted him with the transportation potential of the developing West, as well as prepared him for efficient utilization of railroads for later transport of his custom factory assembled bridges. Further, Gillette also founded an Iron Company associated with the American Bridge Company, later absorbed by the U.S. Steel Corporation (*Who Was Who In America* 1943:457). In addition, before 1900, Gillette-Herzog had constructed a number of steel bridges in Montana, eight of which were still standing as of 1982 (U.S. Department of the Interior 1982:33). In fact, the company had a branch office in Butte. From there it is likely that Gillette-Herzog agents handled the bid and

construction process for the city of Palouse's new steel bridge (the "F" Street Bridge), and afterward brought their command of resources and experience into practice in effecting completion of the structure.

As noted earlier, easy assembly of steel Pratt truss bridges by unskilled laborers, who could be directed by foreman with little or no engineering expertise, contributed to the popularity of the Pratt truss design in the West. As confirmed by a 1901 news story describing on-site construction of the "F" Street bridge, assembly of the bridge type was indeed the relatively uncomplicated undertaking it was reputed to be:

> "The new steel bridge across the Palouse River at this point is now being put in place, the material having arrived last week. James Hinchcliff, of Elberton, a brother of County Commissioner Hinchcliff, is overseeing the work. The bridge will rest on stone and concrete pier and will be the most substantial bridge in the county" (*The Palouse Republic* 2 August 1901:1, col. 5.

The crossing which accommodated the county's "most substantial bridge" in 1901 had previously quartered an earlier wooden bridge, and was most likely predated by an even older structure (J. B. West interview 10 September 1990). The "F" Street bridge site occupied the original entrance to the town of Palouse, a road whose origin was at Almota on the Snake River twenty-seven miles to the southwest (Anonymous *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* 1901:217). Then a major emigrant travel and supply route north, traces of the original Almota Road are still visible on the steep hillside above (south) of the "F" Street Bridge. According to informants, before white settlers arrived in the country, the "F" Street Bridge site was a "natural crossing" utilized by Indians passing through the area. This fording apparently continued to be used by various local tribes for a number of years after white settlement. Reportedly, Indians favored the terrace east of the crossing as a resting place in their travels, as early settlers told of being kept awake "half the night" by the singing and dancing of the Indians who were camped there (J. B. West interview 10 September 1990).

"Palouse City," as the town was first known, was one of the earliest communities established in the region from which the town and the river which flows through it takes its name--the Palouse Country, or Palouse Hills. Triangular in shape, this block of rich agricultural land lies to the south of Spokane (then, as now, the largest city in eastern Washington). The Palouse Country's southern boundary is formed by the Snake River. It is bounded on the east by the mountains of Idaho, and on the west by eastern Washington's channeled scablands. Characterized by rolling hills, originally covered with bunch grass, the fertile region traces its present name to the French-Canadian fur trappers, who called the area *La Pelouse*, meaning "grassland country" (Robert Hitchman *Place Names of Washington* 1985:223).

Settlers began arriving near what later became the city of Palouse as early as 1869, and by 1873 a community (later Palouse) had formed on land homesteaded by James A. "Modoc" Smith (*History of Whitman County* 1901:216). In 1874, W.O. Breeding established a grist mill on a flat on the south bank of the Palouse River immediately east of the present "F" Street Bridge. By 1875 Breeding's grist mill and upriver dam, which flumed water to power the mill via an overshot water wheel, was ready for operation. The grand new grist mill drew marveling settlers from the surrounding countryside, and a celebration in the form of a dance was held inside the mill (Florence E. Sherfrey *Eastern Washington's Vanished Grist Mills and the Men Who Ran Them* 1978:121). During the time Breeding worked on the grist mill, he also hired a surveyor to plat the town of Palouse, and businesses began springing up on the hillside south of the flour mill (*Vanished Grist Mills* 1978:121,125).

In 1888, a disastrous fire devoured the rapidly growing community, including the grist mill (then known as the "Palouse Flour Mills"). Undaunted by the fire, the citizens of the town quickly rebuilt. After the fire, however, the townspeople decided to move what was left of the business section of the town west of the burned Palouse Flour Mills to the flat on the north bank of the Palouse River which it occupies today (*Vanished Grist Mills* 1978:125). Meanwhile, one J. G. Wiley rebuilt the grist mill at the same location of the recently burned structure (*Vanished Gristmills* 1978:125).

Centrally located to a number of diverse resources, including the Hoodoo gold mining district to the east, vast timber reserves in Idaho and along the heavily wooded banks of the Palouse River in both Idaho and Washington, and rich agricultural lands surrounding the town, by 1890 well over 1,000 people lived in Palouse (D. W. Meinig *The Great Columbia Plain* 1968:332). In 1888, the Spokane and Palouse Railroad reached Palouse (Palouse Town and Country Study Program *The Palouse Story* 1962:21) By the early 1890s, Palouse had become one of the region's busiest shipping points, as well as headquarters for the Northern Pacific's (NP) important Palouse Branch (*The Great Columbia Plain* 1968:332). Shortly after the NP reached Palouse, the railroad extended a spur along the south bank of the river to the Warehouse District, which then included the Palouse Flour Mills (the old Breeding Mill), The Gray and Gray flour Mill and the Langdon and Skeelis Sawmill. The spur was, however, apparently short-lived. Following loud complaints by local townspeople, who objected to NP trains running directly past residences located along the spur, the NP abandoned the road bed and the ties were salvaged to build city sidewalks (*The Palouse Story* 1962:23). Whether or not the spur was still in service at the time the "F" Street bridge was constructed is unknown.

When the "F" Street Bridge was built in 1901, a history of Whitman County compiled and published that year, described the flourishing city and its properties, including bridges:

> "A register of the present business places of the town would include three general merchandise stores, two hardware and furniture stores . . . two drug stores, two second-hand stores, a candy factory and bakery, two butcher shops, one hotel in operation and one temporarily closed, two restaurants, four blacksmith shops, two wagon shops . . . a sash and door factory, four saloons and a brewery, a bottling works and candy store, a bank, a cigar and stationery store, two shoe shops, a tailor shop, a millinery store, a suite of undertaking parlors, a harness and saddlery store, two photograph galleries and a newspaper . . . ." (*History of Whitman County* 1901:218). In addition, the account continued, "Four bridges span the Palouse river within the city limits and a fifth, a fine steel one [the present 'F' Street Bridge], is now under construction" (*History of Whitman County* 1901:218).

Clearly, the new steel bridge was not only a source of pride for the community, but the choice of its placement also indicated the river crossing's importance to the local transportation and marketing network, particularly in terms of agriculture. To illustrate, following construction of the bridge, the structure was identified by the principal enterprise which it served--the "Palouse Flour Mill Bridge" ("Engineer's Report" 1909). Oldtimers in the community remember farmers in horse-drawn wheat wagons lined up across the bridge at harvest waiting their turn to unload grain at the Palouse Flour Mills, a practice which continued until the early 1920s (J. B. West interview 10 September 1990). In addition to the "F" Street Bridge serving farmers both north and south of town, it also no doubt provided convenient access to the warehouse district west of the flour mill (described earlier on page 7 of this report).

The "F" Street bridge's role assumed new importance in 1903 with the announcement of the sale of the Palouse River Lumber Company to a giant in the realm of corporate timber capitalists--the Potlatch Lumber Company of St. Paul, Minnesota. At that time, Potlatch Company's expansion plans included nearly doubling the capacity of the former Palouse River Lumber Company sawmill in Palouse, and the building of a railroad from Palouse to timber reserves in Idaho. The Potlatch Company wanted direct rail access to Idaho's timber reserves, in part, to end dependance on the colorful, but increasingly inefficient, annual log drives on the Upper Palouse River to sawmills in towns further downstream, including Palouse, Elberton, and Colfax. Announcement of these ambitious, labor-intensive plans generated an economic boom in Palouse. This, in turn, produced an almost instant housing shortage in the town of ca. 1,500 residents (Evelyn Rodewald "Palouse: Boom and Bust? 1900-1920" *Bunchgrass Historian* 1982:23).

The interests of the Potlatch Lumber Company soon clashed with the milling concerns of Voltz and Metcalf, then co-owners of the old Breeding grist mill. Voltz and Metcalf needed a consistent pool of high water impounded by the dam upstream from the "F" Street Bridge to generate power for their milling equipment. Consequently, the millers occasionally refused to

open the dam for Potlatch logs destined for sawmills downstream. In 1905, Potlatch Lumber Company solved this conflict by buying the Voltz and Metcalf flour mill and converting it to electricity. This action ended dependency on water to generate power for the grist mill, while concurrently assuring control of the river for the company's log drives (*The Palouse Story* 1962:24). The Potlatch Company substantially upgraded the grist mill during their ownership of the enterprise (1905-1910). By 1909, milling capacity of the business stood at 115 barrels per day (*Palouse Enterprise* 1909:1). Undoubtedly, traffic over the "F" Street Bridge increased during Potlatch's control of the grist mill.

Potlatch Company sent most of the flour milled at Palouse to their lumber camps deep in the Idaho forests--an indication of the huge work force and hearty appetites of the men then employed by the timber company (*Vanished Grist Mills* 1978:130). Beside purchasing the Voltz and Metcalf Lumber Company in 1905, the Potlatch Company formalized plans for building their earlier suggested railroad, a route which would follow the Palouse River for forty-seven miles into Idaho. This route accessed 4,000,000 feet of timber, as well as opened up new agricultural markets. The company further revealed that it would build a complete new company town and sawmill nine miles to the east. The proposed community shortly became Potlatch, Idaho. Soon employees of the Potlatch Company at Palouse worked day and night supplying all the cut lumber for the plant and houses of the new company town. In addition, sewer tiles and brick produced in Palouse were shipped east to the new town site, where the imposing new sawmill opened in 1906 ("Palouse: Boom and Bust?" 1982:24).

Over the next few years Palouse continued to hold a vital place in the transportation network of the area. With the arrival of the Spokane and Inland Electric Railroad in 1908, convenient transportation of goods and people between Spokane (ca. 70 miles to the north), towns along the eastern border of Washington state, and the city of Palouse was assured. In addition, another rail line serving the town, The Washington, Idaho, and Montana (WI & M) Railroad, built two huge grain warehouses in Palouse. These storages totaled a combined capacity of 500,000 bushels of wheat. Meanwhile, Palouse continued to act as the transportation link for the Potlatch Lumber Company and for the local agricultural area ("Palouse: Boom and Bust?" 1982:24-25). In brief, the town's many railroad and highway bridges were vital connecting threads in the fabric of the town's status as a regional transportation network.

The unparalleled prosperity Palouse had enjoyed, virtually since its founding, was, however, soon to collapse. After months of anxious rumors, in 1910 Potlatch Lumber Company closed the big sawmill in Palouse (the town's largest employer), attributing the closure to a lack of demand of lumber in the East. That same year, following a visit to Palouse by radical prohibitionist Carrie Nation, the town "voted dry" in the November elections; subsequently twelve saloons closed, the local brewer quit business, and families hastily began leaving town

("Palouse: Boom and Bust?" 1982:26). Amidst these economic downtums, however, the old Breeding flour mill adjacent to the "F" Street Bridge continued as an economic mainstay of the community.

In January of 1910, an event occurred that illustrated a difficulty of the bridge since the time of its construction ten years before--its hazardous approaches. The incident was described in the *Spokesman-Review*:

> "Palouse, Wash., Jan 17. A runaway which might have brought fatalities occurred on the hill entering Palouse from the east yesterday. The family of Leon Brown, a farmer east of town, was coming to Sunday school in a sled, when the team took fright at boys coasting on the hill and ran away, plunging down the steep hill at high speed. The bridge crossing the Palouse River stands just at the foot of the hill, the road making a sharp turn just at the bridge. The team plunged through the railing over the bridge to the river bank, 12 feet. Two of the children were thrown out before the team reached the bridge, and a little girl was thrown clear off the sled just as it went over the bridge. One horse was killed in the plunge over the bridge, a piece of the bridge railing piercing his heart" (*Spokesman-Review* 18 January 1910:6).

The *Spokesman-Review* reported on another problem with the bridge (this time a structural deficiency) in an article published the following year (1911). Reportedly, the "F" Street bridge was built of "too light steel to stand the traffic and it was necessary to reinforce it." Just how the bridge was reinforced was not explained, but, excluding routine maintenance, the work at that time may have been the only notable alteration in the long life of the "F" Street Bridge. Apparently shortly after Whitman County bridge crews reinforced the "F" Street Bridge, the City of Palouse assumed ownership of the structure, as no county records on the property were available after 1909 (original bridge plans have not been located in county or city records).

The early years of the nineteenth century continued to see improvement and experimentation in bridge design. In the spring of 1912, for example, the Whitman County Engineer listed the type, number, and dollar valuation of bridges over 20 feet in length, and indicated the trend of bridge building in the future (use of reinforced concrete) in his recommendations to the county commissioners.

> "The report shows that there are 32 steel bridges, 74 combination bridges, 44 trestles on piles and 106 trestle bridges on framed bents. The value of all County bridges is $203,832. County Engineer McCaw recommended in the report that a beginning be made this year on the construction of permanent bridges and culverts, using reinforced concrete" (*Spokesman-Review* 6 March 1912:10)

In 1911, Palouse area farmers and local business men purchased the flour mill from the Potlatch Company. A photograph of the bridge taken about 1920 shows the flour mill (then called the Palouse Milling Co.) and its proximity to the "F" Street Bridge (see photo WA-31-10). Heavy service of the "F" Street Bridge continued through the early 1920s. This was especially true beginning with European involvement in World War I in 1915 and continuing to the end of the war in 1919. During those years American farmers were encouraged to increase grain production for the war effort. Demand and prices soared; indeed, the harvest of 1919 produced the greatest profit in the history of the Palouse area ("Palouse: Boom and Bust?" 1982:32-33). One can only imagine the drumming of thousands of hooved feet over the "F" Street Bridge during those years. Since the NP spur to the Palouse Milling Company (the old Breeding mill) had been abandoned years before, all hauling to and from the mill across the "F" Street Bridge was by horsedrawn drays (*Vanished Grist Mills* 1978:130).

Following the war, demand for grain sharply diminished, causing an agricultural depression that lasted until the mid-1920s. In January of 1923, the Palouse Milling Company burned to the ground, never to be rebuilt (*Vanished Grist Mills* 1978:130). Shortly after the mill burned, the dam was also removed, ending a business which, though it changed hands a number of times over the years, had operated continuously at the site since 1874. While loss of the mill no doubt reduced vehicular traffic over the "F," Street bridge, until its recent closure, the bridge still served to connect the rich local agricultural areas of East Cove and West Cove to the city of Palouse. As discussed earlier in this report, presumably, after the flour mill burned, the bridge eventually came to be known as the "F" Street Bridge. Traffic over the bridge continued to diminish over the years, and the crossing gradually assumed the pastoral character that it exhibits today.

When the "F" Street Bridge was last inspected in 1984, it was classed "structurally deficient." At present, the posted load limit of the bridge is 10,000 lbs. Because of age and various structural deficiencies noted in past bridge inspections, the "F" Street Bridge is closed to all traffic ("Environmental Assessment" 1989:3,8). The bridge is part of the Washington State Rural Arterial Highway System and will be replaced with a new bridge which will meet current design standards. Because of its historic significance to the development of the city of Palouse and the surrounding local region, its status as the last remaining through Pratt truss bridge of its type in Washington State, and its listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the City of Palouse, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and interested citizens are working with the city of Potlatch in an effort to have the bridge moved to Potlatch's 16.2 acre "Scenic 6 Historical Park" (the park itself is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places). In the light of its past association with the city of Potlatch and its historic development, relocation to the Scenic 6 Historical Park would seem a fitting last resting place for the venerable "F" Street Bridge.

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